TO CORRESPONDENTS.

All communications for this paper should be accompanied by the name of the author, not necessarily for publication, but as evidence of good faith on the part of the writer. Write only on one side of the paper. Be particularly careful in giving names and dates, to have all letters or figures plain and distinct.

FARMING BY CONTRACT.

A New System of Farming in Central Kansas—Wheat-Fields of Four Thousand Acres Worked on Contract.

[Letter from Abilene to the Chicago Tribune.]

The readers of the *Tribune* will doubtless be surprised at the statement that there is a place in the United States where farming is done on the same plan as here in Dickinson County, Kan., and where, except in California, it is done on so large a scale. The peculiarity of the country consists in what is called the "contract system"—that is, where the owner of the land hires all his work done by the acre, the man who does the work furnishing his own teams and implements. The plan was first tried by Mr. F. C. Henry in 1873, when he had 500 acres of prairie broke and put in fall wheat. It was reaped in 1874, yielding nineteen bushels per acre. The same land, with 700 acres more, was sown in the fall of '74, making the great 1,200-acre fenceless wheat-field that was so much written and talked about at that time, being, I believe, the largest field of wheat raised anywhere east of the Rocky Mountains up to that time. This year Mr. H. has in about 4,000 acres, all of which was done on the same plan. Many others have gone to work on the same system, farming to wheat from 500 to 3,000 acres this year. The wheat is just beginning to ripen, and if harvested safely will be much the best yield and much the largest acreage ever harvested in this county. And the amount of ground now being prepared for fall seeding indicates that the acreage next year will far exceed this.

Many of the readers of the *Tribune* would like to know the profits of this method of farming. I will give it as nearly as I can. We will take the bare prairie to start with. It costs $2.50 an acre to get it plowed the first time: say $1.25 for seed, and $1 for harrowing three times, which would make $4.75 per acre. An average crop is eighteen bushels. It will cost about $4 to harvest, thresh and market it, or say $9 per acre for all the expense connected with the crop—leaving a net profit of $9 per acre, with eighteen bushels per acre, and the price $1 per bushel. And your real investment is only the expense of putting in, or $4.75 per acre. The harvesting, threshing and marketing can be paid out of the crop itself. That is certainly a good showing for land that can be bought at $4 to $10 per acre, and the yield in this country is oftener over eighteen bushels than under.

But the contract system has other advantages—public or social advantages I may call them. It is not only a very profitable and easy way of farming large bodies of land with comparatively small capital, thus paying the large landholder handsomely, but it is a great benefit to the smaller land owners and poorer farmers. It gives them a chance to do some cash work. Cash is the thing they need, and in this country, in addition to getting in their own small crops, they can take contracts from the contract farmers, and thus there is mutual advantage. A great many people—in fact a majority—come to the West very poor. They have no money, and till they raise a crop they have a hard life. Now, with a few of the large contract farmers in a neighborhood, it is very different. The new comers can "get a job" at once. In May or June prairie is to be broken and corn planted and cultivated; then comes harvest, threshing, hauling, plowing for fall wheat, drilling, harrowing, etc., all of which is cash work, and a Godsend to hundreds of the poorer class of emigrants.

When we consider the quality of the land in Central Kansas, the price and terms on which it can be bought, the expense at which it can be worked, I question whether there is another place in the country which offers the same inducements to either rich or poor people who think of changing their location. A section of good land can be bought on eleven years' time if desired at from $4 to $10 per acre, according to distance from railroad. For $3,000 the whole section can be broke and seeded to wheat. If the crop is an average, it will more than pay for both the labor and the land the first year. *In many cases this has been done.* A man having, say, $4,000 or $5,000, can easily purchase and seed a section on the contract system. But if he takes a quarter or half section, and, instead of having it all producing something, improves sixty or eighty acres each year, and puts his money in teams and machinery, etc., he will make slow progress compared with the man who owns nothing but his land and puts all his money in crops. This method of farming is also much facilitated by the Herd law. Farms do not need to be fenced here. The man who owns stock is responsible for his stock, and part of his responsibility is to keep it off his neighbor's crops. This is a great advantage to a new country. All the money and time that would otherwise have to be spent in fencing can now be devoted to buying more land and in cultivation. And it costs for herding but a tithe of what fencing would cost. In fact, all the stock in this county is not worth what it would take to fence the crops that are now growing without an attempt at a fence. Mr. Henry has 3,000 acres of wheat in one body adjoining Abilene. It would cost him many thousands of dollars to fence it. It costs each man who has a cow but twenty-five cents to have her herded on the prairie and kept off every body's crops. At night the stock must be correlled or tied.

This is but a brief glance at what is a growing, popular, and new system of agricultural industry in this country, and one that I am sure merits the attention of all those who meditate removing to a country where land is plenty, good, and cheap, but where money, in the nature of the case, is yet scarce, but where it may be made very fast with proper industry and average intelligence. May it not be that this system, with its mutual advantages and large profits, will prove to be the germ of a new social and industrial philosophy among the farmers of these great plains, which, instead of being the barren regions they have long been supposed to be, are proving to be the most fertile and profitable farming lands in the country, and which in a few years will change the home of the buffalo, antelope, and Indian into the abodes of the most happy, prosperous, and independent people in the world? The conditions are all here for just that state of things, and, inspite of drought and grasshoppers, which are fast losing their terrors, that state of things is fast becoming a reality.

There are many things that stand closely related to the subject of this article, but it is already too long. However, if any reader of the *Tribune* wants special explanations, and will address his inquiries by letter to Mr. F. C. Henry, he will give full information in reply to such inquiries.

An Intrepid Youth.

A farmer named Johnson, living near Clinton, Wis., the other Sunday morning, when preparing to leave for church with his family, noticed a rough-looking customer lying under some currant-bushes. Mr. Johnson suspected from the fellow's caution that he was far more dangerous than the ordinary tramp, and gave instructions to his son Calvin, who is 19 years old, to fasten the doors, pull down the curtains, and watch for developments. After the family had gone a short time, young Johnson heard a noise in his bedroom, and, going inside the room, waited at the foot of his bed, with revolver in hand, and, when the thief was climbing into the room through the window, told him to go away, or he would blow out his brains, but the daring burglar ran to and grappled with Calvin, grabbing hold of the weapon. Johnson pulled the trigger, and shot the prowler through the left hand, the bullet nearly coming out at the top of his wrist. When this was done, he cried for mercy, and Calvin tied him to the bedstead with ropes. He was taken to town, and Dr. James extracted the bullet. The trial took place Monday morning before Justice Slosson, in a crowded court-room, when it was learned that the villain's name was Lewis Hansen, and that he was of Norwegian parentage. The Judge sent him up for 30 days.—*Chicago Tribune.*

—An old Cuban planter at Matanzas having a million dollars to leave his heirs, and wanting to make sure there should be no squabbling over it, made a will of 32 pages written in Spanish, verified by 28 pages in English, and certified to by witnesses and notaries who are themselves certified to by others, and so on almost ad infinitum.

Guide to Conversation.

I.—WITH A YOUNG MAN.

The Young Lady—You were saying?

The Young Man—I was saying that—that the garden is charming. Shall we walk round it?

T. Y. L.—With pleasure. Wait till I call pa.

T. Y. M.—Why?

T. Y. L.—So that he can go with us. He will tell you all the names of the plants.

T. Y. M.—O, we needn't trouble him.

T. Y. L.—Ah, you are great on botany, then.

T. Y. M.—No, but (with intention) I am satisfied to know that an object is charming without caring positively to know its family.

T. Y. L.—Take care, you are trampling the grass!

T. Y. M.—You can talk of grass when within me I feel—

T. Y. L.—What? Are you not well?

T. Y. M.—Ah, if I dared to tell you the nature of my complaint—!

T. Y. L.—If you cannot tell it to me, you can tell ma. Ma!

T. Y. M.—No, no; never mind calling her. I am better. I am quite well.

T. Y. L.—But that is my handkerchief you have. I have been looking for it all day.

T. Y. M.—Ah, yes, it is yours. In fact, I dared to take the liberty of ——

T. Y. L.—Why did you not say that you had forgotten your own? My brother would have lent you one.

T. Y. M., *aside*—Adorable naivete!

II.—WITH A FUTURE FATHER-IN-LAW.

The future Father-in-Law—Well, my friend, you do not accompany the others to the billiard-saloon?

The Future Son-in-Law—God forbid!

T. F. F.—I see with pleasure that such places of amusement have no charms for you.

T. F. S.—Bah! What attractions can they possess for a young man of high principles?

T. F. F.—Still, once and a while.

T. F. S.—No, no; it is never right to palter with one's principles. Loss of time, loss of money, loss of reputation—such, alas! are the fatal—the invariably fatal—consequences of indulgence in such a habit!

T. F. F.—Then you will remain and water the garden with me?

T. F. S.—Why should I not?

T. F. F.—You will not find much amusement in it.

T. F. S.—On the contrary it is a most health-giving and fascinating occupation. Beholding you I shall become convinced that honest labor can fortify man and ennoble and enlarge his mind.

T. F. F.—That is very true. I see that we shall get along very nicely. Since you are fond of rural occupations, after we have watered the flowers suppose we pick the caterpillars off the rose-bushes?

T. F. S.—The very thing I was about to propose! Pick caterpillars in the company of an amiable and wise man—I know of nothing so charming!

T. F. F.—(aside)—What a noble fellow! He can not fail to make Maria happy!

III.—WITH AN ARTIST.

You (halting before one of his pictures)—By Jove! what is that? (With ecstasy)—A Rembrandt, by all the gods!

Artist—No; a little piece of my own.

Y.—Of yours? No, no; surely not; impossible.

A.—Indeed, I assure you it is my own work.

Y.—It can not be. I beg your pardon, but really it can not be. It is so magnificent! Why, the moment I glanced at it I said to myself, "That's a Rembrandt—Rembrandt at his best."

A.—Honestly? You are flattering me.

Y.—No, no. I speak frankly. I do not beat about the bush. I say, simply and seriously, "Behold a masterpiece." Why didn't you send it to the exhibition?

A.—I did. It was rejected.

Y.—Rejected? Rejected? O, the idiots, the ignoramuses! Ah, jealousy, jealousy! They know that the day you become known to the public it is all up with them, and no one will remember that they existed!

A. (modestly)—O!

Y.—Luckily it makes no difference to you. With your genius you can afford to wait. Don't deny it—you have genius, great genius. Come, now, is there any one in the Academy could paint the figure in the left foreground? No. Is there any one in the Academy could accomplish that bit of coloring? You know there isn't. Those who know the first rudiments of drawing are ludicrously ignorant of color; those with a vague idea of color inspire pity, by their composition. Here, on the contrary, drawing, coloring, composition, all are perfect. Is it not so?

A. (convinced)—It is, it is.—*New York World*

THE GEM OF THE SIERRAS.

A Lake that Never Freezes, and Never Gives Up Its Dead.

[From the Salt Lake Herald.]

Truckee is a thriving railroad town, and the starting point for Lake Tahoe—called the "Gem of the Sierras." The road from Truckee winds along Truckee River up a canyon bearing the same name. It is fourteen miles long, and a succession of fine views the whole length of the road. The snow-clad Sierras are on our right, and beautifully timbered hills on each side of the river. A few miles up the canyon a successful fish farm is in operation, where tens of thousands of trout can be seen in every stage of a trout's existence. As we read of the canyon we find we are also at the outlet, or head of the Truckee River, whose waters, like all the other rivers of Nevada, are lost in sinks. None of them have an outlet into the ocean.

The view as we emerge from the canyon is beautiful. The broad expanse of the majestic lake lies before us, encircled on all sides by towering mountains. Half of the lake is in Nevada, the other half in California. It is 28 miles long and from 12 to 16 miles wide, and has been sounded to a depth of 1,600 feet. Its waters are a beautiful ultramarine, and it may be called the purest water in the world, containing by analysis only 4 per cent. of impurities. It is so light and mobile as to be easily lashed into foam, or calmed to a mirror-like surface. In the early morning it is like a looking-glass, with surrounding objects reflected in it with surprising accuracy. Several steamers of small tonnage are used in navigating it. Its altitude is about 6,300 feet, it is always cool and pleasant in the hottest weather. The lake never freezes, and never gives up its dead. No person that was drowned has been known to rise to the surface. Wood, as soon as it is saturated, sinks to the bottom. The water is as clear as a crystal, and huge rocks fifty feet down are plainly discernible. In fact, it is a marvel, and the very contrast of our own Salt Lake; for that is so dense and sluggish as to offer great resistance to the human body, and every thing else that will float.

The finest place on the lake is Emerald Bay. Ben Holladay owns a beautiful place at the head of it—a very neat residence in a shady nook with the snow-clad summits of the Sierras for a background, and a magnificent waterfall for the middle distance. The foreground is every thing an artist can desire. Near by is the beautiful little islet called the Emerald Isle, on which an old salt called Sailor Dick built a home and a grave where he intended to be buried should he die on land, but I am credibly informed that he got on a drunken spree and sunk, to rise no more, in the lake. The property is now in charge of another seaman, called Sailor Jack. He may properly be called the hermit of Emerald Bay, for there in the deep recesses he lives without the society of any other human being, his only companions being three dogs and four cats. He is indeed a curiosity, but the soul of good nature. Old Dick's fate seems to have set him thinking, for he is a total abstainer now. The story of his conversion is worth being told. He relates that on one occasion, when crossing the lake, a squall upset his small boat. Down he went with it, he says, seven feet. He swam to the surface and grasped firmly his demijohn of whisky in one hand and the upset boat in the other. He thought, "Now this might be my last drink, and as it is cold I will take a swallow." He then took a look at the favorite bottle and hesitated to throw away so much good liquor, and thinking it was cold thought he would try yet another, and there, on a cold dark night, with the prospect of death staring him in the face, he vowed to take his last drink of fire-water. This resolution he has firmly kept.

A cascade of surprising beauty is seen at the head of the bay. It is over 100 feet high. The towering masses of rock on each side make a beautiful setting for this shower of pearls.